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ABSTRACT

Discussed are issues in the development of a physical setting for child care facilities to encourage the physical and psychological growth of preschool children. Questions to be considered in selecting a location are given to include available space and nearness to the neighborhood being served. Encouraged is consideration of mental stimulation, curriculum, and behavior management in planning the learning environment. Planning the indoor space is said to require evaluation of the amount of space, shape of space (whether one large or several small rooms), arrangement of space (children need private places), movement of traffic, the housekeeping corner, the block building area, the reading nook, the painting section, the water play area, the kitchen, and storage. Aspects of the outdoor area discussed include need for a space to run, ways to efficiently use whatever space is available, ways to provide play space when no outdoor space is available, safety, and storage. Child care institutions are encouraged to be creative in the development of inexpensive or free materials such as old tires. Also noted is the need to consider the climate when planning a year round facility and program. (DB)

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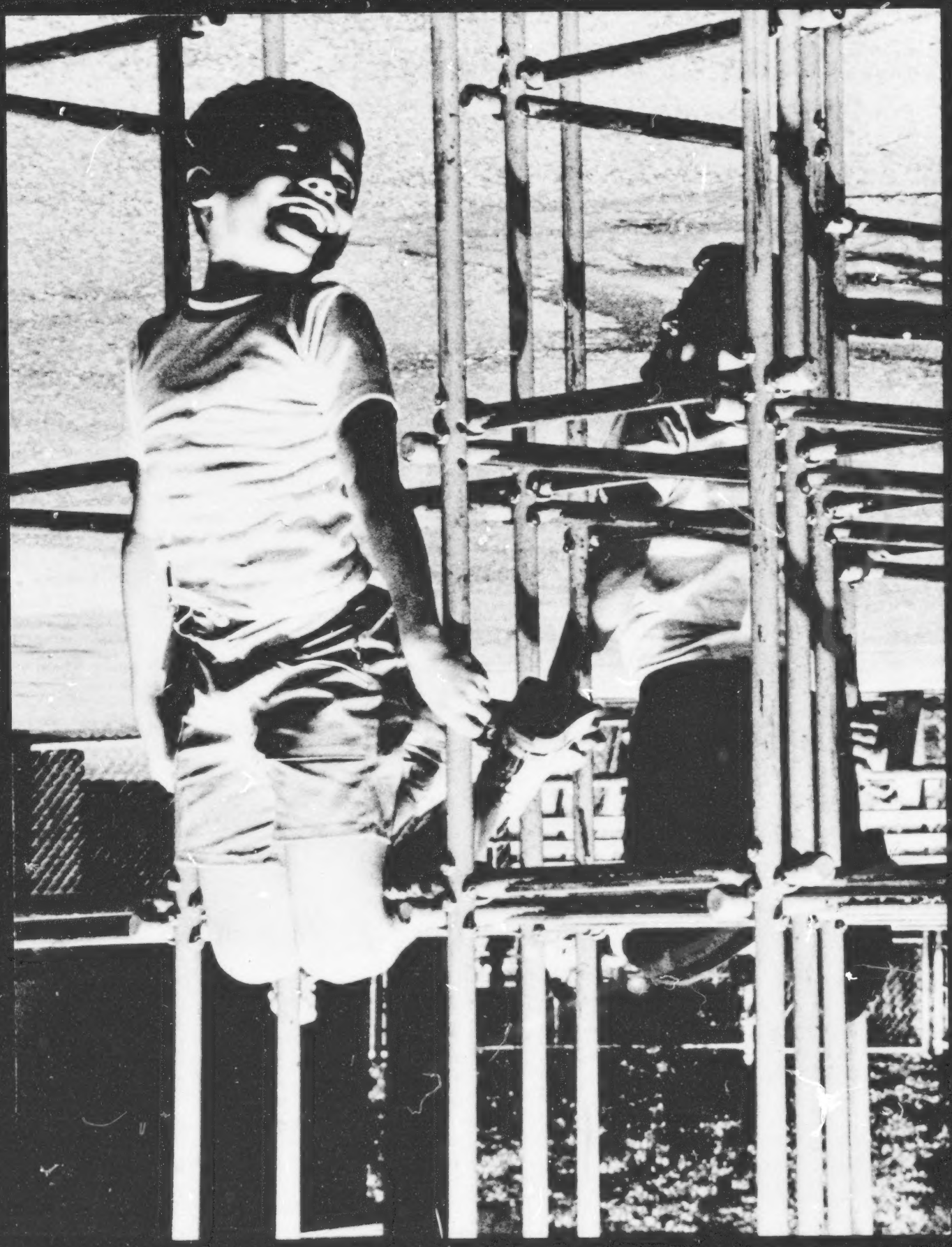

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caring for children—number six

A SETTING FOR GROWTH

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preface

The influence of a good child care center is not limited to the children who are cared for, the staff itself, or the mothers who participate. Older and younger brothers and sisters, friends, neighbors, volunteers may all gain from changes brought about by the child care center. In some instances, the neighborhood is brightened up, inspired by the attractiveness of the center, and pride emerges to spark new efforts. School teachers and principals, ministers, and local agencies also grow more helpful, more interested in children.

This comes from the friendliness of the center staff to the whole family and to the neighbors. It also comes from the quality of every aspect of the child care center—the cheerful setting, the good food, the well-organized space for activity, the children's progress in learning and self-control, the experience of helping to improve the center itself and the neighborhood, the resulting good feelings, and a contagious sense of progress.

At one child care center on a dirt road full of deep ruts and holes, with some adjacent yards full of junk and neighboring houses in a run down condition, major changes occurred. The city street department improved the road; the real estate agent repaired and painted nearby houses while resident owners painted their own; and volunteers from the police department cleaned up the junk. Yards bare and full of scraggly weeds were seeded and made neat. It all takes effort, but the response releases new energy.

Thus child care centers have the opportunity of providing massive help for the nation's children through contributing to wholesome physical, mental, and social development, and also to an improved environment for the children. The child in a good center all day will receive good food, exercise, and rest to build a healthy body, as well as assistance in correction of physical problems.

Through constant communication with teachers and aides, language is developed, vocabulary is enlarged naturally, thought is stimulated, and a healthy self-concept evolves. Use of toys and other play and work materials involves exercise and development of sensory motor skills, along with many concepts of color, size, shape, weight, balance, structure, and design. Stories and songs encourage integration of feelings, action, and ideas, while developing imagination.

Spontaneous play in the housekeeping corner or with blocks allows the child to play out his observations of the family and the community. Other children may broaden their ideas and skills through watching and joining in the play.

Neither health, nor adequate mental development, nor constructive social behavior can be guaranteed for the rest of the child's life if the following years do not also meet his needs adequately. But good total development in childhood can provide prerequisites for further growth and can help to prevent the beginnings of retardation, disorganized behavior, early delinquency, and emotional disturbance.

acknowledgments

I owe most to two groups of workers with young children: first, my former colleagues at Sarah Lawrence College, who taught the children at the Sarah Lawrence Nursery School—Evelyn Beyer, long time director of the nursery school, and Marian Gay, Rebekah Shuey, and also colleagues at Bank Street College for Teachers with whom at different times I shared teaching and research experiences. But in addition, I owe much to the directors and teachers of many nursery schools and day care centers across America and around the world. Especially exciting to me were the Basic Education schools of India, initiated by Gandhi and Zakir Hussain; and Bal Ghar in Ahmedabad, India—a unique integration of the best American nursery school concepts, Montessori principles, Basic Education, and some traditional Indian patterns, organized with a special balance of good structure and flexibility that I came to know as Kamalini Sarabhai's genius.

I am equally grateful to the creative staff of the North Topeka Day Care Center—Josephine Nesbitt and Forestine Lewis, who "dreamed up" the center to meet the needs of deprived children in their area; and among the intercultural group of teachers and directors, Sarita Peters, Mary Wilson, Jane Kemp, Connie Garcia, Chris Smith—each of whom had special talents in handling the children, stimulating and supporting their growth. Cecile Anderson has been especially generous in sharing her unique story—techniques, observations of children's favorite stories, and ways of looking at children's constructiveness and pride in achievement. Among the volunteers, Lillian Morrow was an inspiration to all of us with her sensitive, skillful, and quietly warm ways, and Carol Rousey contributed expert and helpful assessments of the children's speech and language development.

The leadership of the local OEO director, Robert Harder, and later J. A. Dickinson, stimulated staff, parents and neighbors, Girl Scouts, occupational therapy groups in local hospitals to help paint, plant shrubbery, build outdoor play equipment, provide toys so as to make possible a pleasant and well-furnished environment for learning and for total development. Shirley Norris, director of Kansas State Day Care, Anna Ransom, wise dean of Topeka day care efforts, and Mr. S. Revely, the local realtor who renovated the neighborhood houses for the Center, all gave time, energy, and warm interest to the development of the Center.

I also want to express my appreciation to the responsive mothers whose progress along with that of their children gave me a new understanding of human potentialities in children and adults of all ethnic groups in America and the urgency of making it possible for these to be expressed.

These guidelines were initiated by Dr. Caroline Chandler, former Chief, Children's Mental Health Section, National Institute of Mental Health, and were supported by PHS Grant R12-MH9266, the Menninger Foundation, and Children's Hospital of the District of Columbia. They were prepared under the supervision of Mrs. Franc Balzer, former Director of Head Start's Parent and Child Center Program.

Lois B. Murphy, Ph.D.

A SETTING FOR GROWTH

Climbing such a challenging object brings cautious judgment of distance, and coordination of arms and legs.

Why does a child need a special setting to grow? With food, shelter, clothing, and reasonable health, every child will grow. It is nature's way.

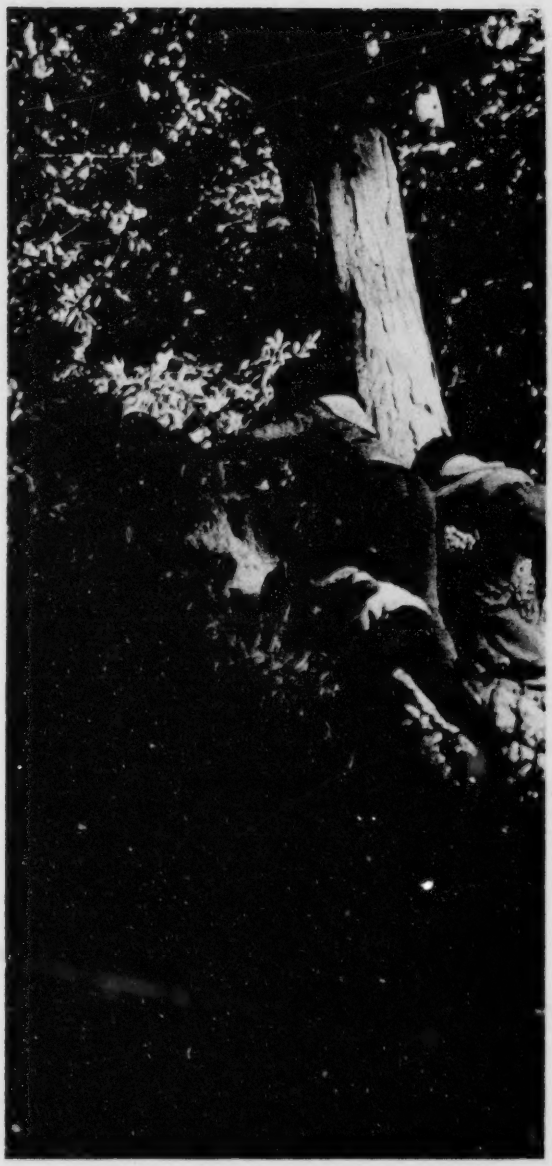
This was the narrow approach of many people years ago in thinking about the needs of children. It assumed that every child's needs are identical. If their physical wants are met, they will grow in body. If they are exposed to words and numbers, they will grow in mind.

This belief was responsible for look-alike public school classrooms with desks bolted down in rigid rows. It prompted the establishment of orphanages and foundling homes to care for large numbers of unwanted children.

Yet, while education was locked into an inflexible routine of memorizing facts, teachers were aware that the so-called "bright" children, who learned rapidly, usually came from homes where there was a variety of challenging things to do and where grownups encouraged them to explore freely.

Today we know that growth is more than getting taller and learning our times tables, though both are a part of growing up. The growth we aim for is mental and social, as well as physical. A muscular six-foot man, who grew up in a drab, stark environment, might possess an impressive body, but might not be able to reason as well as a 10-year old boy, who had lived all his life in a challenging setting. Our fictitious "superman" might also harbor such angry feelings toward the world that he cannot work with other people nor earn his own living.

With total development in mind, we must examine the setting of a child care center in a different light. We assume that the building is sturdy and the floors solid; that the heating plant is adequate to keep it warm in winter and that there is sufficient ventilation in summer; that the plumbing works and there are enough toilets; that



Exploring the woods uses all one's senses and muscles.

the floors are free of splinters or covered with a smooth, easily cleaned surface; that if there are stairs, the railings are strong enough to hold the adventuresome child who can't resist a slide down the bannister.

We know that rooms with large windows to let sunlight in and permit small eyes to view what is happening outside are desirable. Draperies may be needed if the street scene is so busy and noisy that it disrupts the children's rest period.

We also know that outside areas should be securely fenced to keep curious feet from wandering away and inquisitive older children and dogs from wandering in. A chain-link fence generally is best for lending a feeling of openness, unless, again, there are too many distractions outside.

For many children, the center is home for most of their waking hours. Therefore, it should be home-like and cheerful, reflecting warmth and security as a good home does.

With all these basic considerations in mind, we now want to direct our attention to space and how it can be used to promote all-around growth in children.

selecting a location

Space—When a search for appropriate quarters for a child care center begins, the first consideration will be space. The searching committee will see empty rooms of various sizes and shapes and outdoor areas of different dimensions and characteristics. They may inspect a vacant house, an unused store, the basement of a church, or rooms in a housing development. It will all be empty space—the first ingredient in making a child care center.

But children are not cattle on the open range. While the wide open spaces may be what some of our animals need, our children need space organized and adapted to fit their particular stage in growth. The way space is used has a great deal to do with learning and development, and everyone responsible for finding the best possible location for a child care center would make a wiser choice if he kept this in mind.

Ample space is essential, of course, but space that challenges, not represses; that settles, not disturbs; that protects, not threatens; that helps, not hinders. When space is handled with the needs of young children in mind, it encourages good work habits. It reduces distractions and promotes concentration. It allows one child, for instance, to paint quietly without interruption, while others carry on an animated game of "visiting the neighbors" in another corner.

Space furnished with a variety of natural and man-made objects stimulates a child's curiosity and makes learning by discovery an everyday occurrence. An environment planned by people who understand young children can aid in the development of self-control. A carefully arranged setting can promote a child's social development and assist him in getting along with others.

It takes a keen imagination to look at an empty room and visualize ten lively youngsters busy doing the things children must do to grow into thinking adults. Both in the initial selection of space and later in the arrangement of this space, creativity can turn emptiness into a setting for growth.

Questions to be Answered—The many considerations of space and its use will be discussed more fully on later pages. To begin with, however, here are a few questions to answer when selecting the space that a child care center will occupy:

1. Can separate rooms be closed off for each group of children? This not only prevents children of different groups from disrupting one another, but also gives each child a feeling of belonging in a particular place with his own teacher, classmates, and familiar furnishings.
2. Are children's rooms protected from adult traffic moving through the center? Endless interruptions can ruin a child's efforts to complete an idea.

3. Can rooms be arranged to provide separate areas for quiet and active play? This eliminates some of the collisions that often lead to quarrels.
4. Is there space enough to provide for supply cupboards, storage of cots, individual cubbies for children's coats, chairs and tables, and still have adequate open areas for play? Many State licenses require from 35 to 50 square feet per child of indoor play space, excluding storage areas.
5. Is there space where a child who needs a rest away from the pressures of the group can work or play quietly by himself?
6. Does the outdoor area offer room for running, climbing, jumping, riding tricycles, and group play?
7. Does the yard contain growing things, like trees and shrubs, that will help a child learn about his world?
8. Where outdoor space is lacking, is there sufficient indoor space for some of the energetic activities that children normally do outdoors?
9. Can the rooms be decorated into bright and cheerful places without major renovations?

Nearness to the Neighborhood—The purpose of a child care center is to serve the people of a community. Therefore it should be located in a place convenient to the people who will be taking their children there every day. An ideal location would be within walking distance for most of the mothers who depend on the center.

At the same time, a center should have adequate parking facilities for staff and visitors and, ideally, an entrance and exit drive so that cars delivering children can drive straight through without reversing.

Converting an Old House—It is easy to become discouraged when seeking adequate space for a child care center in an aging city neighborhood. Unless there has been some urban renewal with new housing, or if a church or other organization has offered rooms, chances are the only empty buildings available are old and rundown. The situation is difficult, but not desperate.

Many old houses are basically solid under their peeling paint and broken windows. If a careful inspection by experts indicates that the heating, plumbing, wiring, floors, and foundation are still good, the house may be fixed up fairly inexpensively with the help of the mothers and fathers of the neighborhood. The landlord should be willing to help finance some of these repairs with volunteers providing some of the labor.

There is a general belief that child care centers should be located on the ground floor of a building. While this is convenient for going out and coming in, a two-story house has certain advantages as well. Children love to play on stairs. They like to see how many steps they can jump over when they get to the bottom and how far their legs will stretch going up. Children living in crowded city neighborhoods without open play space devise all sorts of games around the front steps of their homes.

When a child care center has successfully fixed up a tumbledown place, it stands out like a shining example in a drab neighborhood. The neighbors who helped paint the walls and

Trees out of doors are full of stimulating discoveries.

clean up the grounds may see that they could do the same jobs in the houses where they live. Mothers who willingly sewed bright curtains for the center's rooms may now have the momentum to do the same for the rooms at home.

It has happened over and over again that the child care center has pointed the way for people to change their own home settings. Discouraged people who find out that there is something they can do to improve their surroundings are likely to become more optimistic about the future and begin to look at the world in a more positive light.

creating an environment for learning

Mental Stimulation—Animals that have been confined to small cages for long periods of time have been tested in competition with the same type of animal that has been free to move about a varied environment. In every test, the animal that had been free had developed a higher intelligence which enabled him to solve problems that stumped the restricted animals.

What is true for mice finding their ways through a maze is also true for children. Some child care centers are so bare of variety and interesting things to do they are like cages. No one knowingly wants to put a child in a cage, yet the effects of such a monotonous setting can be as damaging to a child's growth as a cage.

Children who grow up in a setting that offers challenges and new things to see and do are the ones who learn faster and develop more resources for coping with life's demands. Children and adults living in places, like orphanages, prisons, and mental hospitals tend to lose interest in their surroundings and in themselves. Both mental and physical health declines in such settings.

Even a child care center that has been made over from rooms designed for another purpose can offer the kind of stimulation that young children need for healthy mental growth. This is the stage of discovery when a child begins to move outside the narrow world of mother and home and learns to live at ease in the wider world.

It is the time in life when all kinds of unrelated information about everything is filed away in the brain to be sorted and ready for recall when needed at any future time in life. We all know, for example, that grass is cool, tree bark is rough, feathers are soft, and dry leaves are brittle. But no adult can remember the exact time he made these useful discoveries. It is during the years before formal schooling begins that a child builds up his warehouse of facts which feeds him information for making conscious decisions throughout his life.

A good child care center must provide an environment with enough variety to allow each child to make countless discoveries about the world.

Curriculum—"Let's see how many different leaves we can find on this beautiful autumn day," Miss Cooper suggested during her group's outdoor period. After the children had brought their collections to her, she turned the leaf hunt into a learning situation. "What color is your leaf, Val? Who found a yellow leaf? Let's help Jimmy count his leaves. He has so many."

On another day Miss Cooper directed the children's attention to the peculiar crawl of an inchworm, and another time talked with the children about the differences between sand and soil in the play yard. When a bus broke down outside the center, Miss Cooper turned the occasion into a look-and-see lesson on motor vehicles. In each instance, she drew on the contents of the setting for her curriculum.

When a child care center, whether in an urban or rural neighborhood, offers a rich variety of experiences, it automatically contains endless possibilities for discovering and learning.

Behavior—Space and the organization of space have a great deal to do with children's behavior.

"David ran into me!"

"Ernestine upset my baby buggy!"

"Carlos bumped my arm and spoiled my painting!"

"Jane kicked over my gas station!"

These are cries that usually lead to punches, pushes, bites, or tears. Sometimes such collisions are intentional pranks of active children, but some may be truly accidental because there simply is not enough room for David and his friends to move about.

Crowded or poorly organized space contributes to tension, excitement, overstimulation, and, as a result of these, fatigue and emotional upsets.

Julian decides to mold clay into a giraffe like the one in the zoo book. He is absorbed in his work until Lisa shoves Carmen against the table. Carmen's hand slaps down—squash—on the unfinished giraffe. When Julian sees his flattened giraffe, he gives up. Instead of experiencing the satisfaction of seeing a job through to a finished product, he takes his frustration out by thumping Carmen for her intrusion.

Many of the children who come to child care centers live in cramped homes where too many people share the same small space. There are no opportunities for steady, uninterrupted focus on constructive projects of their own. For them, space where they can pursue their interests with a fair amount of peace is essential if they are to develop the good habits that spell the difference between success and failure in school and at work.

Changing the Environment—Norman was having trouble peddling his tricycle through the wet grass. After getting off and pushing it twice when it got stuck, he decided to try riding on the cement walk instead. The wheels turned easily, and Norman's frustration turned to delight at the fine ride he was able to enjoy.

By this simple act, resourceful Norman learned two things. He discovered that wheels do not turn easily on grass, and he also learned that he can do something about changing his environment all by himself. If he doesn't like riding on the grass, he can move to the walk and improve his situation.

This knowledge that a person can bring about changes in his environment that will make his own life or the lives of others better may influence Norman in later life. It may help him realize that he doesn't have to accept unpleasant conditions in a passive way but can take steps to make things better.

Many child care centers have room dividers that children can rearrange themselves to give them the sense that they can change the setting. Light-weight, movable fences outdoors also allow the children to convert the playground into a zoo or a playpen or anything else they want it to be.

indoor requirement

Amount of Space—Many States require from 35 to 50 square feet of indoor play space per child before a license is issued to a child care center. This must be open space used strictly for play and may not contain any storage facilities. Check with the bureau that issues licenses in your State to find out what requirements must be met.

Remember, the State lists the **smallest** amount of space a center may have. If a location is available with more indoor space, so much the better, as long as it is organized in a way to help the children grow.

There must be enough indoor space to:

—permit free movement of children and adults

—provide an area large enough for periodic group or circle dancing, marching, or running

—offer protected areas for special activities, like building or reading

—allow sleeping cots to be arranged so there is free movement between them

—arrange lunch tables so that children can move freely around them and chairs are far enough apart for ample eating room.

Another factor in deciding how much indoor space is needed is the age of the children to be housed. The older a child, the faster he moves and the more space he covers. While toddlers under three can be happy in a fairly small room, three- and four-year-olds may need to tussle and roll on the floor or zoom from one

Watering and caring for a garden helps a child to learn how plants grow.

end of the room to the other at times, especially when the weather is bad and they can't go outdoors. This kind of activity naturally needs more space.

To arrive at the play space available, begin by measuring the total room area. Then subtract the space occupied by storage cupboards, cots, shelves, coat cubbies, as well as any space set aside for the movement of traffic. The difference will be the area for play.

In mild climates many indoor activities can be carried on out of doors. With the addition of an awning or roof for protection from the sun and rain, a patio could well become an extension of a classroom. Such outdoor areas may be included in the figure for indoor play space if they are usable the year around. However, they must lend themselves to the type of quieter play that children do indoors and may not be merely a section of the play yard.

Shape of Space—Rooms come in all shapes as well as sizes. Generally speaking, a large square room is easier to adapt to child care than either a long narrow room or several small rooms. In a square room low book shelves or cupboards can partition off special play areas, yet one teacher is able to keep an eye on each corner and reach a child in danger in an instant.

A disadvantage is that a large room with many different activities going on at the same time tends to be noisy. Music from the record player can be heard in the book corner, and when a bridge of blocks collapses, the noise interrupts everyone's thoughts.

Small, separate rooms, on the other hand, are cozier and will keep most of the noise confined to the ears of those who make it. However, it is impossible for one teacher to see what is going on in each room. Such an arrangement demands more adult supervision.

Long, narrow rooms also are difficult for one teacher to oversee. When she is at one end of the room, she is quite a distance from the children at the other end and cannot reach them quickly in an emergency. If the space is not carefully arranged, a long room also may give the appearance of a hallway. And children in hallways do one thing—they run. A long open room is likely to affect children the same way. While running is good exercise for growing legs, no teacher can keep order in a group of children

under constant stimulation to run.

Arrangement of Space—"Sonja, Sonja," calls mother. "Dinner's ready." But there's no sign of Sonja, yet mother knows she is in the house. After another call, mother begins to search for her missing daughter. A giggle soon leads her to the corner behind daddy's big chair. There scrunched way down is a laughing little girl who has just played a trick on her mother.

All children love to hide—to find a cozy corner away from everyone and spend some time by themselves. At home Tim likes to twist himself up in the drapes and stand like a statue. Marie thinks it's fun to take the sheet off her bed and cover her play table to make a hideaway. Lamont likes to pretend he's a dog and get under the kitchen table and beg for a bone. Each in his own way exhibits a need to get into a little nook away from other people for a moment.

Arrangements in a child care center can provide some quiet niches for children to hide in or secret places where teacher can hide surprises for them. A new toy becomes extra attractive when it has been found during an exciting treasure hunt.

In addition, the arrangement must provide an open space where the entire group can play a singing game, and an area for work tables. Movable toy or book shelves or cupboards on wheels can divide off corners for special activities—reading, painting, building with blocks, listening to music or making sounds, and keeping house. The amount of action involved and the number of children who usually take part will determine how large each area will be. Reading and painting are likely to interest only three or four at a time, while five or six children may be busy playing daddies and mommies.

These special areas must be protected from adult traffic and from invasions by other groups of children. It is such a temptation to peek into the next room and see what is going on. And if one child does this, like as not the rest of the children will jump up to look too. Order flies out the window, and confusion takes over before the teacher can steer the first child back to what he was doing before he got the urge to peek.

If three-year-old Bernadette has to walk through the two-year-old area on her way to the toilet, she really can't be blamed if a new toy attracts her on the way back. She may forget where she is headed and decide to stay a while and play, unmindful that she is disrupting the younger children in the process.

When the bathroom is located so that children have to cross through another group's room to reach it, the committee might look into the possibility of installing another toilet in an out-of-the-way spot, under the stairs, for instance, or in a corner of the kitchen.

Movement of Traffic—Some child care centers in old houses must live with rooms that were designed originally for family living. The living room, dining room, and kitchen may open directly into one another without a connecting hallway. If a hallway for through traffic can be constructed in some way, so much the better. If not, dividers may be arranged to route traffic along the side of the room so that distractions are kept as far away from the central play areas as possible.

Adults do not like to be interrupted when they are concentrating on something. How distracting it would be to have a stranger peer over your shoulder and ask what you are doing when you are trying to write out a grocery shopping list! Children find it just as distracting to have to shift attention from the picture they are cutting out to answer a question from a casual passerby. Yet when visitors must pass through a play area to get to other parts of the center, it is a great temptation to stop and chat with the children. Even the clack of high heels or the bright color of someone's coat may compete for attention when the work tables are too close to the lane of traffic.

Space cries out for ingenuity and boldness in arranging it in the way that will be best for the children. Whenever you want to change the way space is organized in a child care center, ask one question first: Is this going to help or disturb the children? If the answer is to help, by all means give your ideas a try.

Housekeeping Corner—Children usually do not play house alone. They need mommies, daddies, babies, aunties, grannies, and next door neighbors. The housekeeping corner must be large enough to accommodate enough child-sized furniture to make the play realistic and to provide elbow space for five or six children. A minimum

area would be about 35 square feet or five by seven feet. This is always a popular spot in any child care center and should take priority in assigning floor space. A two-story playhouse takes up less floor area, but requires a room with a high enough ceiling to permit the children to stand up on the top level. There are individual differences in space needs.

Block Building Area—Architects are people of vision who think in soaring dimensions. Their creativity demands room for expensive expression. So, too juvenile architects in the block corner need room to express their creativity—whether it be a highway system, an airport and runways, or simply a garage. If the children are to be encouraged to try new things, they have to have the space to spread out. This space should be off by itself as far away from traffic as possible to offer reasonable assurance that the buildings won't be knocked over.

Anyone who has watched young children building with blocks knows that "spread out" is just what they do in many ways. It is very likely that at least one will be sprawled flat on his tummy trying to get the precise balance for the block he is placing. When three youngsters tackle building projects at once, they can easily use as much as 75 or more square feet of space.

Reading Nook—A product has to be attractive to sell. This is the message that pummels us constantly from television and radio. Publishers of children's books got the message many years ago and began printing their books in large, easy-to-read type with colorful drawings. Librarians caught the message and began to furnish children's rooms in libraries with comfortable chairs and tables and decorate the walls with bright posters in their efforts to "sell" children on the pleasures of reading.

Well-planned child care centers too can help make books attractive to young children by providing a cozy, comfortable area for reading. Children who enjoy reading and learn readily when they go to school usually are those who had someone read to them and who were free to handle books when they were quite young.

The reading corner should be quiet, away from traffic and active play areas. A couple of child-sized armchairs or rockers will give it a homey, relaxed atmosphere. It should be a place a child wants to enter for pleasure.

Low book shelves are excellent dividers to set the reading corner apart from the rest of the room and, at the same time, put a selection of books within reach of small hands. An area about four by six feet, not counting the space occupied by the shelves, should make an adequate reading nook for one or two children.

Painting Section—Good child care constantly seeks ways to help a child express his thoughts and feelings. Painting is one of several ways a child can do this. Therefore it is desirable that paints and easels be ready for use at any time. Sometimes children need several days to experiment with paints and develop an idea. If a child can paint only when teacher decides to set up the easels, he is likely to forget the idea that he started to express that last painting day but perhaps did not complete at that time.

Artists need to organize their feelings in a quiet atmosphere. This must be kept in mind in placing the easels in an out-of-the-way spot. An upset easel or jarred painting arm may not only spoil a child's work, but could interrupt his train of thought and prevent his completing his project.

For a group of 10 to 12 children, it is advisable to have two standing easels available at all times. Double easels where two children can be accommodated at once—one on each side—are more practical for they allow four children to paint at the same time in a relatively small area of about four by six feet.

Water Play—The feel, sight, and sound of water are soothing to adults and children alike. Vacation resorts usually are located by the sea or a lake because of the restful effects of the nearby body of water. Babies and young children particularly love to play in water.

Once an infant gets used to the strange feel of his body immersed in water, his bath usually becomes a high point in his day. He not only has fun splashing, but also enjoys the full attention of the adult giving him the bath. He begins to associate water with warm feelings about other people.

As the infant grows and learns to move about by himself, he will seek out water to play in. Many a horrified mother has found her 18-month-old splashing his hands happily in the

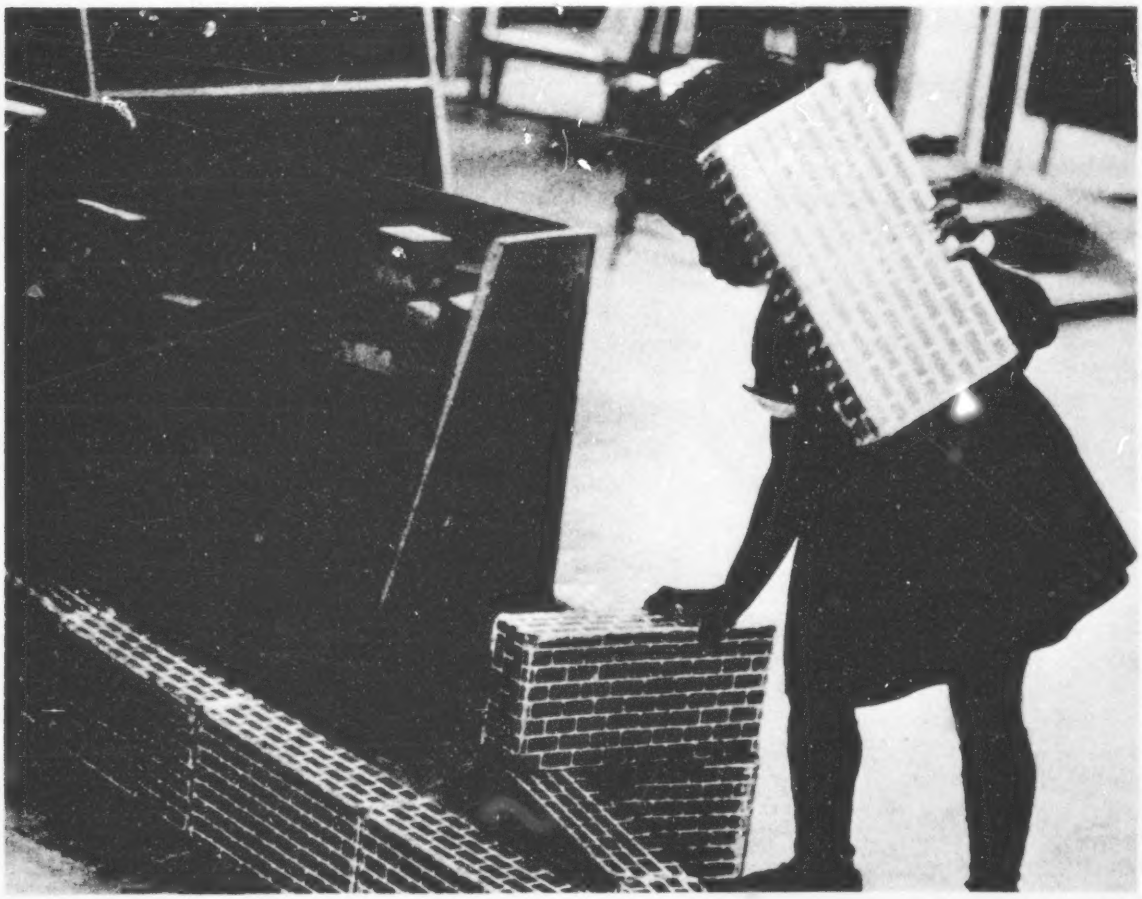
toilet bowl.

If it is at all possible, a child care center should recognize this need and provide some place where children can play in water. A low sink in the room may become a doll's bathtub or a place to wash dishes. Some centers have especially built water tables where four or five youngsters can bathe their babies or simply pour water from small containers into larger ones. This simple activity can fascinate a normally hyperactive child so much that he is able to remain quietly occupied for a half hour or so. In the process, he begins to develop a feeling for what it takes to fill empty space. A dishpan or washtub on a low table may serve the same purpose.

When the water table is connected to the plumbing, the children have the added experience of turning water on and off. However, children sometimes forget to turn the water off, or they may not even know that water will overflow when the container is full. Teacher must keep an alert eye and a handy mop, just in case.

Usually in a center converted from an old house there is a tub in the bathroom. This may be useful. There are centers serving children from homes without running water. Bathing becomes a chore when water has to be carried from a pump, and baths are not given so frequently as in homes with modern plumbing. If the center has a bathtub, a teacher's aide can pop a dirty child into a warm bath when he arrives in the morning and make him feel more comfortable all day.

A bathtub can be useful in hot weather as well. Many children at home take long play baths on sultry summer afternoons. There is no reason why children in a center cannot enjoy the same pleasure. Two or three at a time can spend 20 minutes or so cooling their bodies and



Large buildings need a large protected corner.

possibly calming their frustrated spirits at the same time.

Kitchen—Food and warm feelings are often tied together in our memories. This goes back to the time when we were infants and were held snugly in our mother's arms while we drank our milk. From the very beginning babies learn that love, a full tummy, and feeling good go together.

Many a young bride is unhappy because her husband seems to long for his mother's cooking when his mother is no better a cook than the bride is. Actually, his memories of mother's cooking are wrapped up in remembrances of a warm kitchen full of tantalizing aromas and perhaps of his coming home from school on a wintry day and having a caring mother give him hot chocolate and freshly baked cookies to warm him up. After a few years of marriage, similar memories will surround his wife's cooking, and he will no longer crave his mother's meals.

When a child care center has a big enough kitchen, and meals are prepared there, the children can benefit from this home-like atmosphere. Just the delightful smells coming from a kitchen will whet the children's appetites to eat a wholesome lunch.

If the kitchen is large enough, it can become an important part of the child's learning. Two or three children at a time can go to the kitchen and help the cook. Even preschoolers can sift flour (if cook isn't too fussy about a bit on the floor) or measure sugar into a cup. They may not be up to breaking the eggs, but they love to work the egg beater. It may be wise for one child to hold the bowl while another turns the handle. Mixing up a meat loaf with clean hands can be even more fun than making a mud pie because you get to eat the finished product later.

While children are doing all these fun things with cook, they are learning many facts about measures, weights, and how different substances feel and act when mixed together. They begin to get an idea of simple fractions—a half and a quarter—as they use the measuring cups and spoons. Learning that such different ingredients as eggs, flour, sugar, butter, salt, and vanilla when mixed together and baked turn out to be cake is a valuable lesson for young children.

There are some children in child care centers who do not know the joys that can revolve around cooking. Night after night dinner may be a TV frozen platter or a hamburger from a nearby drive-in or a peanut butter sandwich. This is not necessarily a condition of poverty. It often is the pattern in middle-income families where mother works or is too busy to cook.

If the child care center can help to provide some of the old-fashioned experiences that are missing in our busy modern lives, it will be giving the children healthy understandings and good feelings to grow on.

A Cheerful Atmosphere—Many people feel moody and out of sorts on a dreary day. Brightness has an effect on human personalities. Several days without sunshine can turn a light-hearted person into a grouch. Surroundings play an important part in how we behave.

If the atmosphere outdoors affects people so strongly, there is no reason to think that the atmosphere indoors has any different effect. In fact, a bright, cheerful room can overcome the depression of a dark day. A room may be inviting

Painting needs a peaceful quiet corner.

or repelling. Hopefully, all rooms in all child care centers shout out "welcome" to everyone.

Good lighting, bright pictures, gay curtains, perhaps a pretty rug in a housekeeping corner all help to make a center a pleasant place to spend the day. If the room is decorated in a way that makes adults feel refreshed, they are bound to be more patient with the children.

Decorations in a child care center do more than look pretty. While they are bringing out a gay feeling, they are serving an important function in the children's development. The child whose drawing hangs on the wall feels he has contributed toward making the room nice. He is proud that his teacher thought his work was worth displaying to other people. If teacher can take the time to mount his painting on colored construction paper to set it off with an attractive edging, it will increase the child's feeling of worth.

Other wall decorations may be designed to help children learn. Almost every room for child care has a large, colorful calendar that the teacher uses in different ways. One teacher may have the children pin the correct number for that day into the proper square. Another teacher may use it to talk about the weather and attach a paper symbol describing that day's weather—a gray cloud, a yellow sun, blue drops of rain. Pictures characteristic of the different seasons help children get the idea of longer stretches of time.

There are so many ways a teacher may choose to decorate her room, it is impossible to describe them all. Any furnishing that produces happy feelings has a place in a child care center.

Storage—In arranging space to help children grow, we must not forget the practical need of places to store things. If children are to learn to live orderly lives, they must be familiar with surroundings where there is a place for everything. The center must have special places for toys, art supplies, books, records, and everything that makes up the setting.

Where toys are kept varies in different centers. Some prefer to keep everything out of the children's reach so that teacher can decide what they will play with each day. However, it seems preferable for toys to be placed on low, open shelves where children can get to them. This arrangement helps a child to make his own

A suite with running water can be used for housekeeping play of many kinds.

choices in what he wants to do and, with repeated reminders to be sure, to help him learn the important habit of putting things away when he is through with them.

In addition to storage for supplies, a center must have a place for children's coats, preferably in child-sized open lockers or cubbies with a hook low enough for a child to reach. This encourages him to hang up his own coat. Each child's cubby is his own and usually is identified in some way, either by his own picture or the picture of a special animal or flower. Adults too must have a place to hang their coats and keep other personal possessions.

Cots need to be stacked against a wall out of the way if there is no cupboard to store them in. Incidental tables are needed to hold the record player, the cage of white mice, the goldfish bowl, the daffodil bulbs the children planted, and the clay elephants they molded. These needs are naturally different in each room.

How to Proceed—When you have thought out what is required in each room, it is time to draw a map

three-year-old loose and what does he do? He runs. He runs because he enjoys using his leg muscles and, when given the opportunity, he cannot resist a lively sprint. While he runs for enjoyment, he also is helping the large muscles in his body to grow stronger and learn to do more things.

Child care centers **must** provide some place where children can run, jump, climb, throw, and do all the strenuous exercises that children have to do to develop. Young children are something like a boiling kettle of water. If a kettle does not have a small opening to let the steam escape, eventually the steam will build up so much pressure that it will burst the seams of the kettle. If young children cannot run and let off steam once in a while, their unused energy will build up and eventually explode into uncontrollable behavior. Ask any teacher what happens to a class of normally well-behaved children confined indoors for several days during a rainy spell.

Some children need more room than others depending on where they live. A child whose home is a small apartment on the tenth floor of a high-rise may have a tiny balcony for a play yard. He rides an elevator up and down, and the only exercise he gets may be walking around the block. In the same way the child whose family lives in a city house may have only busy sidewalks and streets to play in. Both youngsters are likely to arrive at the center ready to tear loose after a weekend of confinement.

On the other hand, children who live in garden-style apartment developments where the management provides playgrounds, and children who live in the suburbs or country have opportunities to use up their energies at home. They may not require so much space at the center.

Some states require at least 100 square feet of outdoor play space per child. Check the licensing bureau in your State for local requirements.

Making the Best of It—Outdoor play space may be large or small, flat or hilly, grassy or paved. It may be shaded by large trees or may bake in the summer sun. It may be a square of grass in the rear of a city house, or it may extend for acres. It may have a brook winding through it, or it may have nothing more than a hose connection. Whatever it is like, it can be adapted in some way for young children.

Just as imagination can turn a bare room into a stimulating setting for growth, so creative ideas and hard work can convert a straggly back yard into a mini-playground. In this kind of planning, size is not so important as ideas. Rolling space is delightful for young children to play in, but when it doesn't exist, there is no use worrying about it. A small outdoor spot arranged with young children in mind can be more beneficial than acres of land that are not used well.

Paved driveways are great for riding tricycles or playing with large trucks. Iron railings around stairways make climbing bars, provided the stairway is not very high and there is always an adult nearby to supervise.

A patch of barren dirt can become a complex highway system under the imaginative hands of a child. Add a little water and the highways turn into rivers for sailing boats. Dig a shallow hole, and the patch of dirt becomes a doll's swimming pool. One group of children can use the spot to dig a pond and an enclosure to exercise a pair of turtles. Another group may want to make a lake and float walnut shell boats. Just digging holes and filling them with water can be satisfying and at the same time help the child to gain an understanding of quantities needed to fill spaces of different sizes.

Another patch of soil can be put aside for a garden where children plant flower and vegetable seeds, water and weed them, and watch them grow. These are all learning activities that can be carried on as well in a small area as a large one.

Where space is plentiful, of course, there is more opportunity to explore and discover. A hill is nice to roll down. A brook allows young engineers to build dams and bridges in addition to giving small feet a place to wade. One center, whose land bordered on a lake, fenced in a section of lake shore beach for a giant sandbox. A wooded area is perfect for hiding games and learning about nature. Children adore secret places, and there is a certain mystery about peeking at the world through thick leaves.

Too much space, however, can be a detriment if it is not handled properly. There are times when it is desirable for the children to be together in a small outdoor area. Some adult helpers may be absent and teacher can-

not keep track of everyone alone, or she may have planned some special activity that she wants everyone to participate in. Whatever the reason, it is best if the space has been divided by a fence or hedge that can form a barrier to restrict the children to one area when it is necessary.

When There Is No Outdoor Space—It can happen in an inner city neighborhood that there is no location with outdoor play space available. What to do? The situation may not be ideal, but it can be handled.

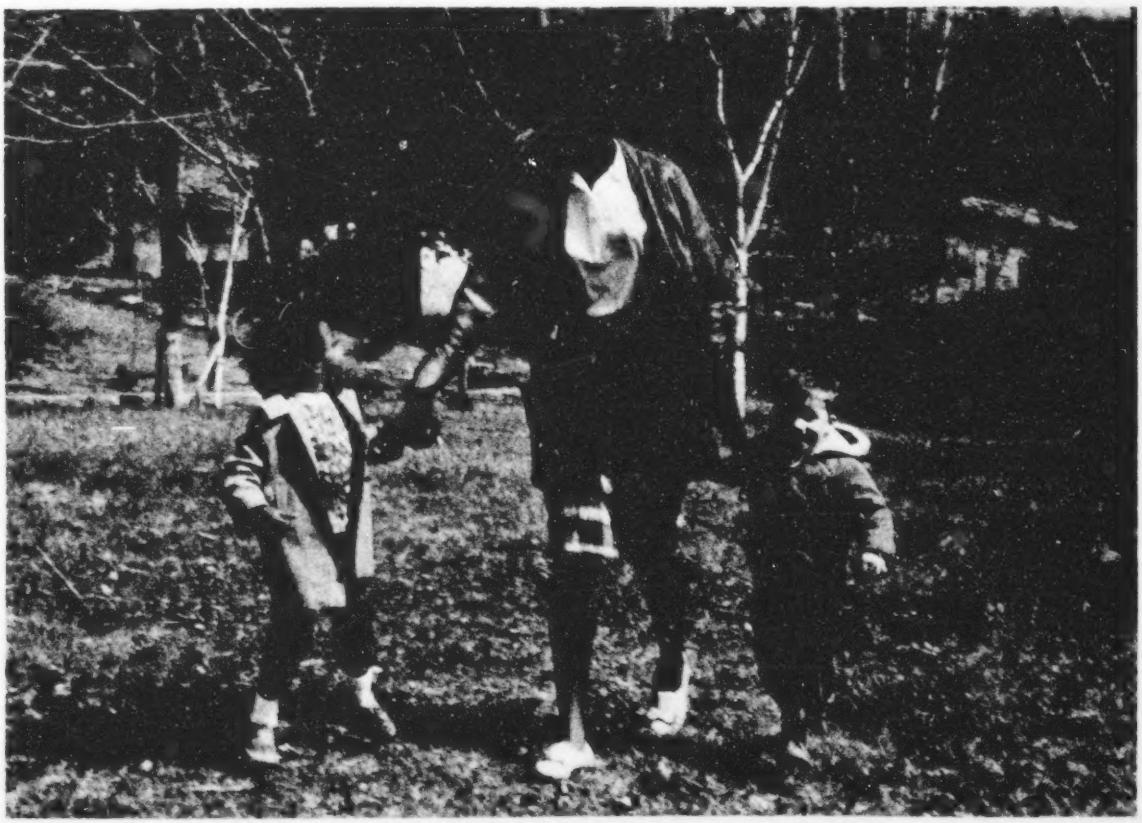
Take another look at the inside space. Can a room be spared as a miniature gymnasium? Other centers have done this by reserving one fairly large room for outdoor-type play. Small pieces of apparatus can fit into such a room, along with a few tricycles and wagons. One such room contained a small slide along one wall. In another room, steps had been added for climbing to a little balcony built above a storage cupboard. Each group has a certain time each day in the mini-gym according to a schedule worked out by the staff.

Some centers also have been able to use space on the roof for a play area. Naturally, it must be made safe with a high fence all around.

When a child care center enjoys good community relations with other organizations, it is sometimes possible to work out a permanent arrangement to use outdoor space somewhere else. It may be a church, a civic association, or even the yard of a friendly neighbor. School playgrounds may be used after the school children have gone home or during hours that the playground is not in use. Parks, if they are not too far away, should also be visited often.

Unless the place is within walking distance however, it may be inconvenient to get there every day, so ample indoor play space is still important.

Safety—When children play hard, they are bound to get hurt sometimes. Accidents cannot always



Running together in a park develops a sense of space.

be avoided, but exercise is so important to a child's growth that this need outweighs the danger of his getting hurt while exercising. Teachers and aides, however, must **always** be close enough to climbing children and alert to rescue them from perilous positions or to warn them of danger. If an accident should occur, the teacher may want to supervise more closely, but she should not nervously restrain children's spontaneous play for fear of accidents.

Part of learning about the world in the early years is to learn the situations that might be dangerous and to avoid them. It may take a skinned elbow for Carter to learn that he cannot turn a sharp corner while pedaling his tricycle at top speed. Sharon may be surprised to find out what happens when she opens her hands while swinging from the monkey bays. Maybe Craig doesn't really know that it hurts when he kicks someone in the face until he kicks Suellen and she cries.

While teacher will sympathize and comfort the hurt children, she knows that the next time they will know better how to keep from getting hurt or keep from hurting others.

Keeping an eye on every child does not mean teachers and aides should hover over the youngsters ready to grab them at every turn. This steals away some of the joys of being independent and discovering by themselves. Keeping an eye on them does mean that adults should divide the play yard into areas of supervision so that an adult is near every group of children In case of an accident. The time outdoors is part of the teacher's work day and not a break for her to spend gossiping with her co-teachers.

Good supervision involves knowing the dangerous areas of the yard and taking steps to make them safer. A jungle gym or slide on a hard surface would be safer if the area were covered with old mattresses. Grass, on the other hand, is softer and less dangerous. Teachers might also be aware that accidents happen more frequently in a crowded play yard.

Part of safety also is reminding the children over and over again what the rules of behavior for the play yard are; namely, no pushing, no throwing objects or sand, no jumping off a moving swing, no running into other children, and a general regard for others at all times.

Storage—If there is storage space outdoors for toys that are used outside, it saves indoor space for other uses. Collapsible garden sheds or even lift vans that are used in overseas shipments will make adequate storage room. Even a lean-to built against the side of the building will offer protection for the bulky equipment. Any storage shed should be located in an out-of-the-way spot where it takes up as little play space as possible. Whatever is used must be dry and secure against weather and intruders.

furnishing space

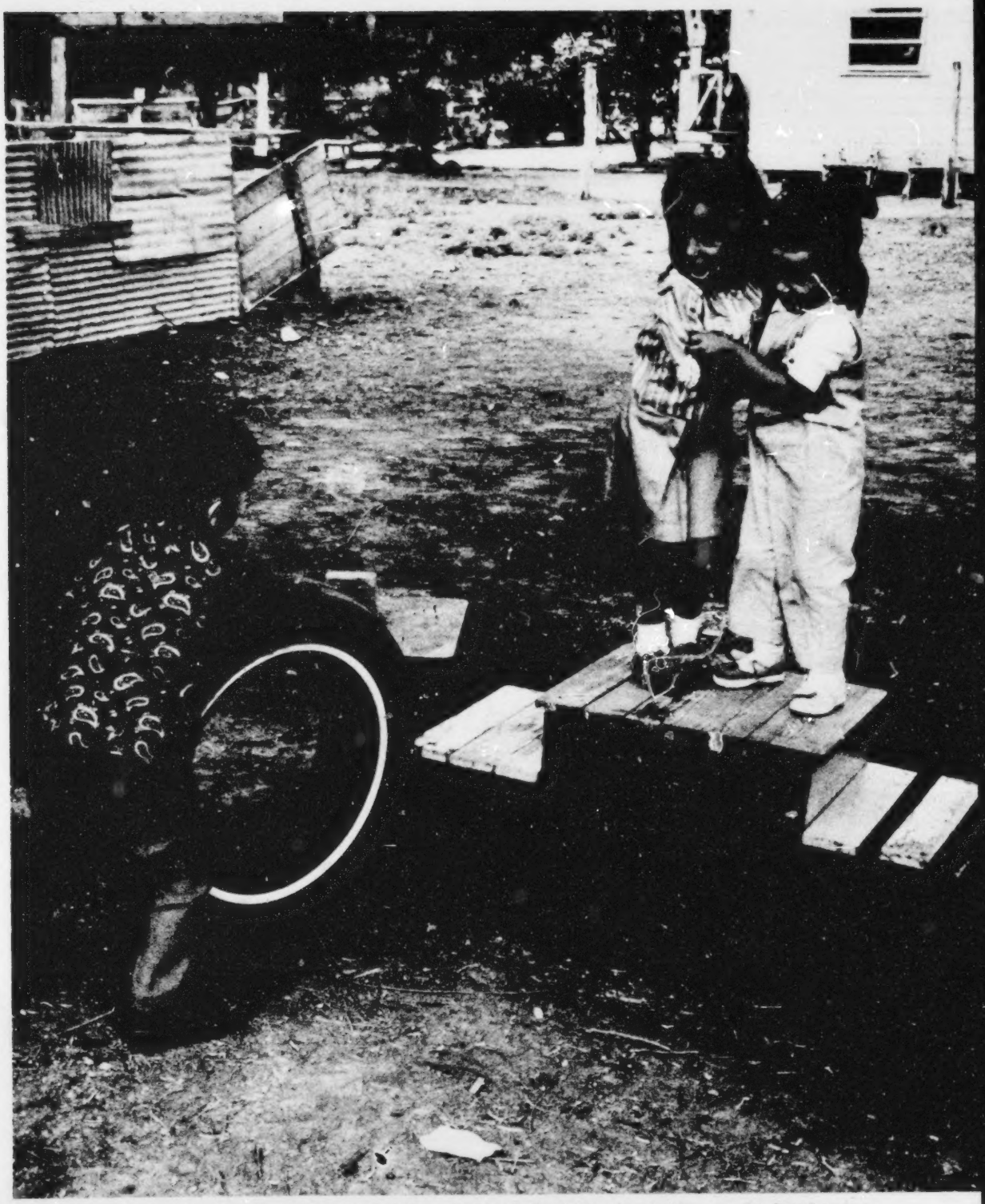
Tools for Growth—Georgine excitedly opened the huge box under the Christmas tree and squealed with delight at the life-sized doll inside. But after examining it and noticing the ribbon in its hair and the lace on its dress, she put it aside and spent the rest of the morning playing with the empty box.

"See, Daddy, I'm in a boat going down the river. Look at me now, I'm hiding from a tiger." Turning the box over and straddling it, she announced, "This horse will save me from the tiger."

Mother and father looked at their smiling daughter and the simple box that had made her so happy while her expensive new doll lay neglected on the floor. Somehow they had chosen the wrong gift for Christmas.

The reason so many gifts seem to be wrong is that adults often forget what toys ought to do for a child. They think of toys as something pretty to look at or soft to hold, not as a child's tools for learning. Later when Georgine is tired, she may find her doll comforting to take to bed, but that morning she needed something to stimulate her imagination.

Child care centers need many such tools to help children grow both mentally and physically. Some will help large muscles grow strong, and some will help small muscles learn certain



Even when resources are limited, objects for building, climbing, stimulating imagination can be found among discarded things.

skills. But the equipment at a good child center must do more than help muscles grow. More exercise would do that. Toys at a center or at home must help children learn about their world.

If children were turned loose in a toy store to experiment with and select the toys they want, the choices might be quite different from those toys well-meaning parents might buy.

Television advertising right before Christmas often leads to frustration as well. The commercials make the toys look so attractive that children will ask for them, and loving parents will buy them. The toys are shown in magnificent, built-to-scale settings that make them look like the real article. What a disappointment on Christmas morning to find that the powerful steam shovel is made of plastic and comes apart easily or the doll that kicks has such a hard body to house all her batteries that she is too stiff for a little girl to dress and undress and will rust if put in the bathtub.

In selecting toys for home or supplies for a child care center, the same question that was asked in arranging space might be asked again: Will this toy help or hinder the growth of a child?

Be Creative—"How can we buy all the equipment we need when we have so little money?" That is the question every beginning child care center asks. Manufacturers today are turning out marvelous equipment for preschool children, but any sturdily built piece that will hold up under several years' assault by lively youngsters is expensive.

Again, lots of imagination and some hard work can often furnish a center at a fraction of the cost of buying everything. This is a project that the director, staff, and parents can cooperate in and together create a setting that will promote all-around growth in their children.

In many public school districts children bring home notes at the beginning of each year asking the parents to send in all kinds of "junk." Empty spools, milk and egg cartons, scraps of material, ends of wood, old tires, plastic bleach jugs, magazines—in fact, just about anything is useful.

As the year goes on, the "junk" begins to reappear in the children's work. Egg cartons come home as bumblebees or Christmas bells. Paper clips, rubber bands, string, and bits of rickrack are glued into collages. Scraps of dress

A rooftop is not ideal, but still one can build and play store, garage or fire station.

An old truck tire makes a cozy sandbox.

fabric end up draping a papier maché choir boy. With the tops cut off at different levels the plastic bleach jugs are now containers to learn about quantities.

In the physical education classes more "junk" shows up. Bicycle tires become hoops for rolling on the ground or spinning around the waist. A tire can be used to stretch muscles when two children sit on the floor facing one another, their feet pressed together, and rock back and forth pulling the tire between them. One imaginative gym teacher got the telephone company to give him a reel that had held cable and managed to obtain the innertube of an airplane tire. The two unlikely objects together made an exciting game of climbing onto the reel and jumping off onto the innertube.

There are so many possibilities no single book can list them all. These few examples are intended only to start the wheels of imagination turning. Additional suggestions will be found in a later book of this series, **Caring for Children,** titled "Conditions for Learning."

Although the emphasis throughout this book is on **making** equipment or adapting some natural object to substitute for a bought item, this does not imply that manufactured equipment is no good. Much of it is excellent. When funds are limited, however, it makes sense to spend money for a few major durable items that may be difficult to substitute and make many of the smaller things that are needed.

Detailed lists of necessary supplies may be found in **Rainbow Series Book 9,** "Equipment and Supplies," which may be obtained from the Bureau of Child Development Services, Office

Large branches of cut down trees can be used for broncos, (or trains, or benches, or playground dividers, etc.).

of Child Development, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, P.O. Box 1182, Washington, D. C. 20013.

climate makes a difference

Think Around the Year—Child care centers usually are open all year round and in all kinds of weather. In selecting a location for a center, the weather at all seasons must be considered. An enclosed and shaded sun porch may seem bright and airy in July, but might be impossibly drafty in February. Likewise, a sunny yard may seem warm and protected in December, while it would be suffocating in August.

A center in a mild climate where most of the year is warm enough for children to be outside without coats can make free use of patios and porches as part of the indoor play area. A sliding-door arrangement from an inside room to an outside area can bring nature closer to the children in Southern California, for instance. However, this same sliding door in Minnesota might make the room so cold that heating costs would be exorbitant.

When winter days are long and dark, large windows to let in as much daylight as possible are desirable. These same windows in the hot south west probably would need draperies to block out the strong glare of the sun. Where the sun is intense, an outdoor area will have to provide some shade, but freezing gales may be the problem of a center in the north, and a solid fence may have to be built to protect the play yard.

Each location is unique. The committee that fulfills its job of selecting the best available site for a child care center must imagine how each location will be during every month of the year. The house that is comfortable in June but unlivable in January is hardly the best setting for good child care.

Planning the Program—You wouldn't expect a child from Florida to be a good ice skater, nor a child from New York City to be very good at riding a horse. There are exceptions, of course, but generally the sports we know are those we can do easily where we live. When it is warm, children near the water learn to swim. When there is a lot of snow, they learn to ski.

The program in a child care center also is dependent on the climate. A center in Minnesota, for instance, might spend only half as much money on tricycles as a center in Maryland, but instead buys a number of sleds. In Moscow, where many days are cold and drizzly, sandboxes are built under large roofs so that children can still play outdoors without getting wet. Open-sided pavilions with roofs and wooden floors also are popular for outdoor play.

Even the day's schedule is tied to the climate. In hot places, it is wise to use the early morning hours before the sun is high in the sky for outdoor activities. During the mid-day heat the children are more comfortable indoors. The opposite arrangement, of course, must be followed when the weather is cold, and the children are more comfortable out of doors when the sun is high.

• • •

In discussing a **setting for growth** we must remember that environment is not only **things.** It is also **people.** The teacher, her aides, mother volunteeers, and the children, themselves, all are vital parts of the setting.

The single, most important influence on a child in a center, naturally, is the teacher. The entire program revolves around her. Adult helpers enrich and bolster the teacher's relationship with the children. But all learning is not necessarily triggered off by an adult. A child, who may reject the lead of an adult, can often learn by mimicking other children.

A skillful, understanding teacher, whose primary goal is caring for children, can provide a challenging program, even when the physical setting is not ideal. On the other hand, an incompetent, uncaring teacher, though working in an ideal setting with the most advanced materials, may still be unable to reach her children. A good teacher in a well-planned setting combines the basic elements for successful child care.

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